

# Pope urged not to offend Muslims again

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THE government has condemned Pope Benedict XVI's remarks linking Islam with violence, and has called for him to take the necessary steps to ensure he will not hurt the feelings of Muslims again.

Foreign Ministry parliamentary secretary Datuk Ahmad Shabery Chik said the pope and other leaders must not link Islam with violence, and ridicule the greatness of Prophet Muhammad.

"Malaysia as the Organisation of the Islamic Conference chair regretted the pope's remarks that could affect harmonious relations between Muslims and Christians," he said, when explaining the government's position after the debate on a special motion to discuss the pope's remarks.

During the debate, Salahuddin Ayub (Pas-Kubang Kerian), who proposed the motion, said it was unfair for the pope to quote a medieval text claiming Islam and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad to be "evil and inhuman".

He said Christians should not regard Muslims as the en-

emy because both the religions had high respect for Jesus.

He said that Malaysian Catholics should disassociate

themselves from the pope's remarks.

Parti Keadilan Rakyat president Datuk Seri Wan Azizah Ismail (Permatang Pauh) also

criticised the pope for making allegations against Islam.

While she accepted the pope's clarification that his remarks were not his personal

view, she called on the pope to withdraw his original statement delivered during a lecture at a German university recently.

"I hope Muslims in Malaysia will continue to respect people of other faiths, and avoid listening to vicious rumours that may affect our harmonious relations," she added.

Roland Kiandee (BN-Beluran) said even Christians disagreed with the pope's view on Islam.

Teresa Kok (DAP-Seputeh) called for Malaysians to be rational and to understand the pope's message in its full context.

"The pope was trying to say that reason has an important role in faith," she said, adding that if one read the full text of the pope's lecture, it could be understood as an effort to foster closer understanding between Christianity and other faiths, including Islam.

Shabery, however, rejected Kok's argument, saying it was unfair for the pope to quote somebody else and give the wrong portrayal of Islam.